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HEMLOCK TWIGS
AND
BALSAM SPRIGS

BY
JAMES PEELE PARKER

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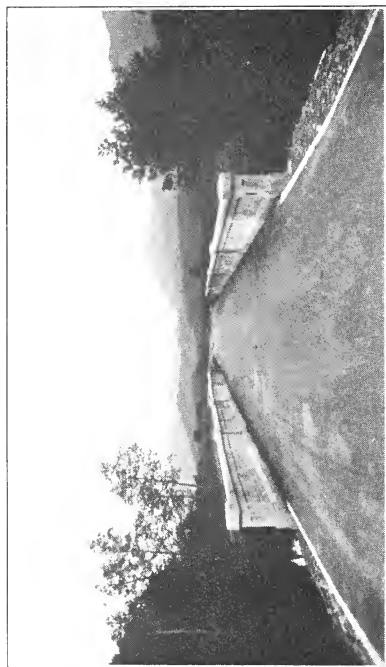
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Foreword

A line or two for seeing eyes,
A word for hearing ears,
And in between a good wish lies
For all the coming years.
The Author.



Highway in the Highland

Here's to our Free-land, hail to her colors!

Here's to our High-land!

Here's to our Sky-land!

Here's to our Home-land, surpass'ng all others!

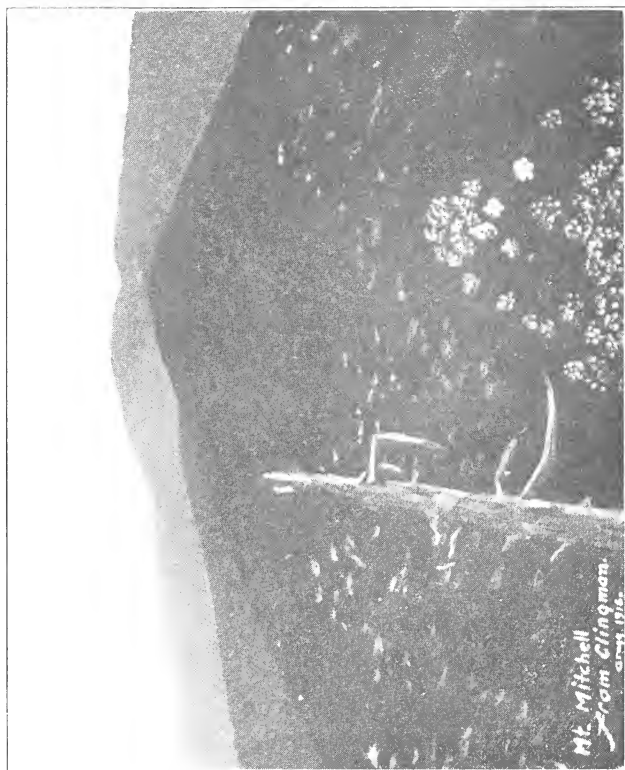


One of the Alcoves

Our Highland Temple

With His own omnipotent hand,
God has crowned our fair Highland
With Nature's temple, vast and grand,
Chis'ling aisles through granite gorges that men may to its
altar come;
Has strung the forests into lyres,
Placed the mountains for its spires,
Turn'd sunsets into off'ring fires,
Set the stars for lighted tapers, and truss'd the sky up for
its dome.

Hast thou crossed its lofty portals?
Gateways fit for the Immortals,
And e'er open to those mortals
Who delight in Nature's friendship, who comrade with the
wilderness.
To learn that altar's excellence
Hast thou trod in solemn silence
Up those aisles in reverence?
'Fore it knelt, with soul uncovered, confessing all thy little-
ness?



"Placed the Mountains for its Spires."

Hast thou caught the ages' anthem
From o'er the choir-loft's gilded hem?
And didst thou breathe a deep amen?
Hast thou loitered in the alcoves, hung with tapestries
sublime?
What! Hast thou never felt the spell?
Had thy soul with inspiration well
Beneath this Temple's organ swell,
That keeps those silent alcoves quivering with melody and
rhyme?

Then come with me and climb to where
We mount this altar's wind-swept stair,
And let us bow in worship there,
Rendering to its Master Builder all our sacrificial vows.
Hast thou any offering brought—
One new, one pure unblemished thought—
That may in fervent prayer be wrought?
Then lift it up, and God will sprinkle incense from His bal-
sam boughs.

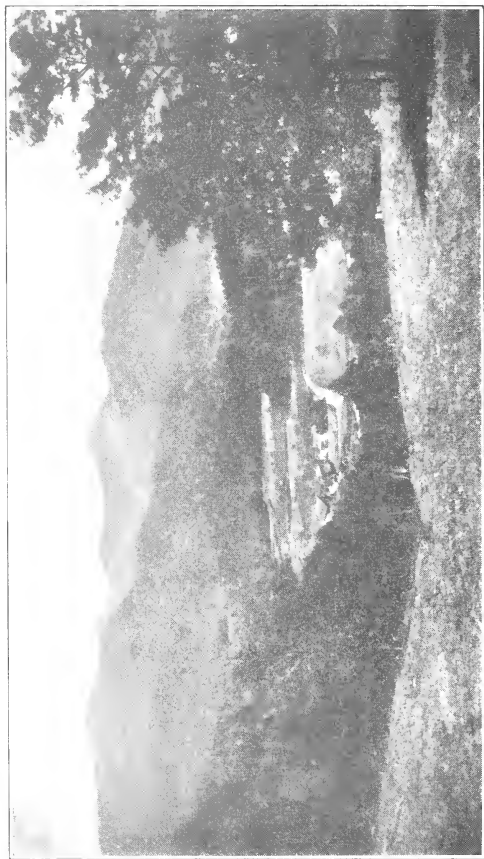


"Is Passionate with Song."

Spring-Time

The Earth's great heart is throbbing fast,
Her life-blood's flow is strong;
She fears no more the Winter's blast,
Is passionate with song.

She folds the winds in loving arms,
Smiles at the deep blue sky,
Laughs at the storm-clouds' fierce alarms
And drinks their burdens dry.



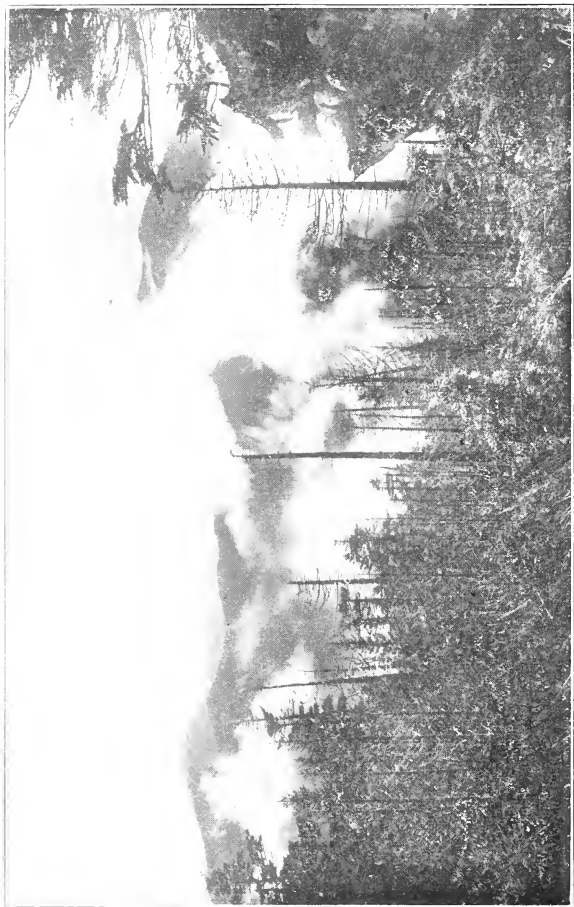
Ever the Same, Yet Always Changing

Craggy

Yestermorn I saw the first bright gleam of sunrise place a golden crown on Craggy's hoary head, then watched in silent wonder as the warm descending rays furled a robe of purple glory over all his majesty.

Last night, the 'Frost King' marshaled all his allies forth and stormed the rugged pile from base to summit's topmost cliff, leaving there an icy helmet where had been the crown of gold.

Today I saw that helmet catch the first red rays athwart the morn, and scatter them in silvery shimmerings to the waking earth and sky; then as the flood of sunlight slowly spread upon his widening slopes, the grand old mountain seemed transfigured before my eager eyes—behold a lofty crystal pyramid arose, whose glittering apex clove a drifting cloud, and whose brilliant whiteness well might rival in its purity, that of the Great White Throne of God.



“While floating clouds, to break their portless journeys, moor upon his breast.”

Mount Mitchell

Where Western Carolina's matchless clime flings loudest
forth its challenge to the spheres,

Mount Mitchell, thron'd in grandeur, sits above his dark
majestic peers ;

Scvereign o'er all that beauteous realm where scenic won-
ders never cease ;

Proud Guardian of that gallery where Nature's hung her
masterpiece.

A million Summers' blossomings are wafting wide their per-
fume from his balsam groves ;

A million Winters' frescoes bear record in his bouldered
coves ;

And yet he's young—how young, who knows ?

Through future ages yet unrun, he'll be the first to mark
the birth of each new day,

And last to see its evening splendor into darkness fade
away ;

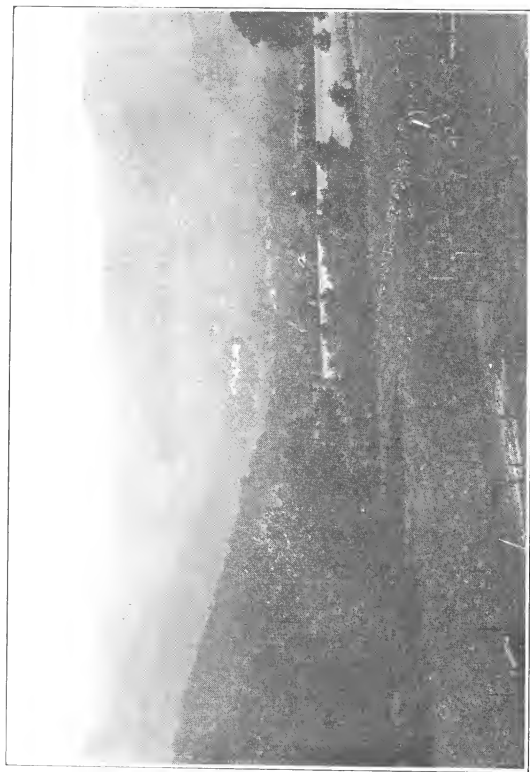
Through cycling seasons yet unflung, he'll watch the
thunderstorm's wild frolic at his knees,

And for satisfying toys, lend the tempest all his forest
trees ;

Through all the aeons yet unsung, his sceptre'll wave o'er
Appalachia's towering crest,

While floating clouds, to break their portless journeys, moor
upon his breast ;

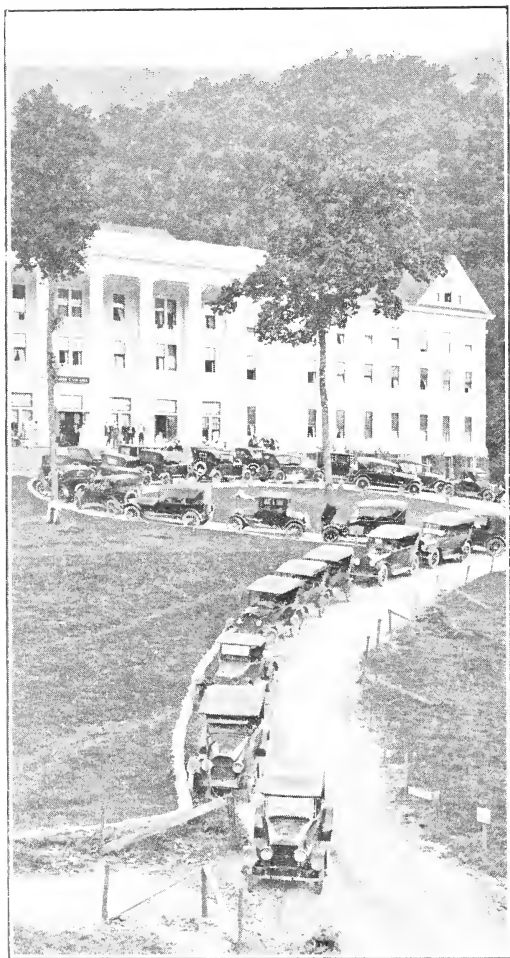
Since when ? Till when ? God only knows.



"The Blue Ridge Mountains spread a deep and rugged lap."

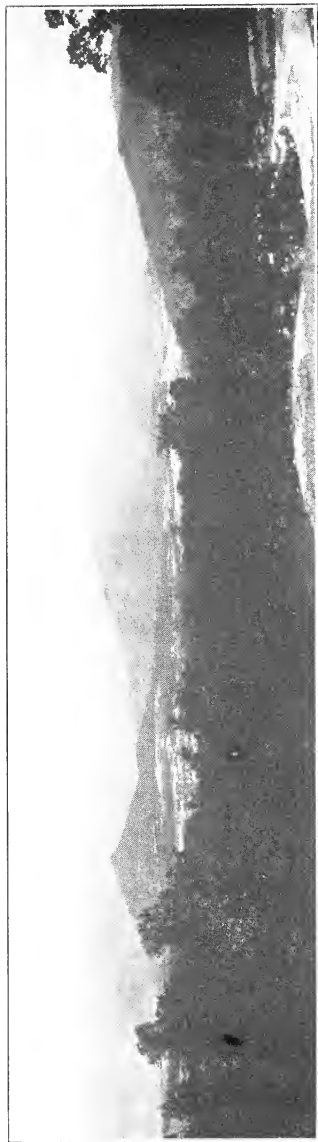
Blue Ridge

Between long sheltering arms thrust down to touch the racing waters of the upper Swannanoa, the Blue Ridge Mountains spread a deep and rugged lap to nurse a wild primeval forest. Beneath this forest's shade, ten thousand rich ungarnered harvests of leaf and flower and seed, have fallen into black decay that next year's harvest might the richer be. Here the native pansy lifts its freckled face beneath the hemlock's tapering spar, and modest violets bow in homage at the great oak's chancel rail; here orchids nod their curious heads beside the fronded fern and ebony stems of maidenhair lean close to the giant poplar's bole; here laurel shrubs their waxen cups unfold, and rhododendron thickets sift their gorgeous petals down; here the wild musicians of the cove select them each a swinging stage, and undisturbed by plaudits of a giddy throng, pour out their lives in rapturous song.



"A Stately Shrine."

Here, too, consecrated leaders among the students of the South, have given to the keeping of that ample lap, a foster child—have builded there by faithful prayer and un-remitting toil, a stately shrine. A shrine where every soul is urged to take the Christian High Priest's covenant, and enter unafraid within his own Most Holy Place—Blue Ridge, the Southern Student's sacred shrine! Where every noble impulse of the human heart finds freedom in the very atmosphere, and inspiration leads through deep devotion's silent trails to large unselfish service for mankind; where all the reverential anthems of the soul swell forth, spontaneous melodies of praise, and rise in sweet accord with the invisible organ of God's Great Universe.

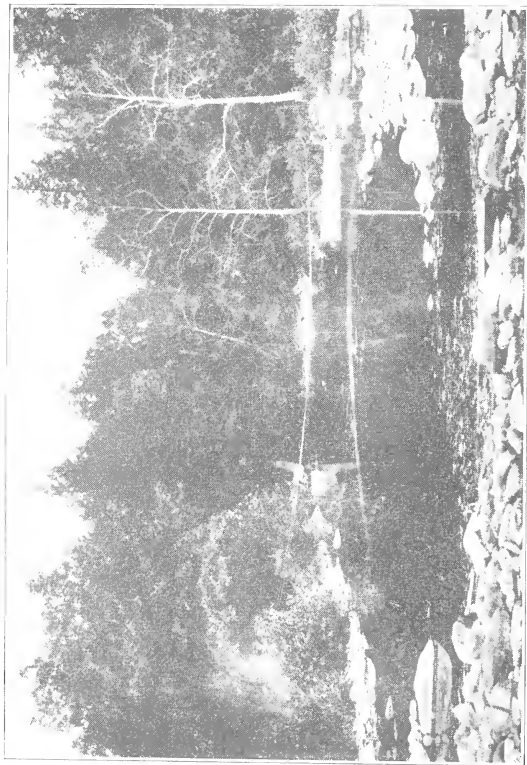


Where the "Smiling Valley" beckons to its Sentinels.

To the Swannanoa

Where fold on fold the ancient earth hath cast her rugged bosom up to meet the bending sky, spring scores of laughing streamlets forth, that, trickling down beneath the fragrant hemlock boughs, leap granite walls to lose themselves in gorges far below, then hurry sparkling out to find a common path, and bless this smiling valley with the music of a Swannanoa.

I love to watch her waters lick
The foot of yonder wooded knoll,
And catch the wildness of her music,
That grows yet wilder in my soul.



"Oh, Child of the Mountains, Oh, Child of the Sea."

To the Swannanoa

Oh, Child of the Mountains, Oh, Child of the Sea,
The sound of thy waters is music to me!
It stirs the emotions deep down in my soul,
And awakens feelings I cannot control.

'Tis freedom to walk by thy wild rocky side
And muse upon fancies borne on by thy tide;
'Tis freedom to sit on thy turbulent shore
And dream of the scenes thou shalt witness no more.

But look! Look quickly! Who now has appeared
On the crest of that cliff, uncanny and weird?
Note the strength of his bow, the length of his spear,
The pride of his bearing, the absence of fear,
And how in his quiver the arrows are set;
Erect in his feathers, a dark silhouette!
'Tis a Redskin's spirit stands out in relief!
The soul of the bravest, a Cherokee Chief!



"Yet leaves thy rapids as wild as of yore."

He's come to revisit the land of his birth,
Again to renew the sweet friendships of earth;
List to the welcome the breezes are bringing,
Oh, hear the glad song all Nature is singing;
I, too, extend greetings, O Proud Cherokee,
My heart's in the chorus, Stray Soul of the Free.

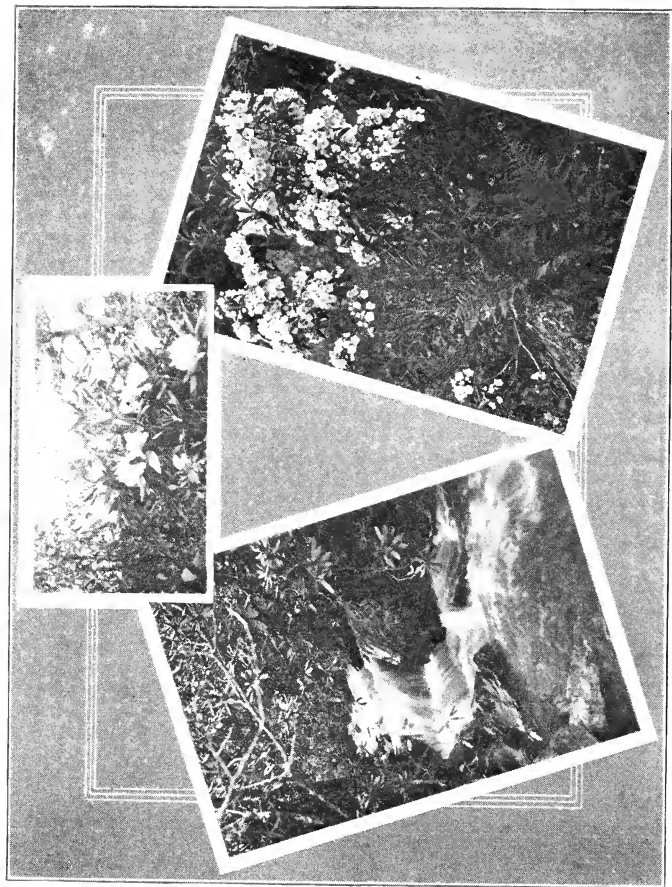
But gone are his huntsmen and gone is the game
He's seeking in vain for, the White Man's to blame;
Gone, too, is the Chieftain, I see him no more,
Yet he leaves thy rapids as wild as of yore;
And like a refrain from the Great Spirit's dell,
Come these echoing words of his long farewell:
"Rush on Swannanoa, through woodland and lea!
Still, the fields and forests pay tribute to Thee!
Oh, Child of the Mountains, Oh, Child of the Sea,
The sound of thy waters is music to me!"



"When Winter piles their gorges deep with snow."

The Seasons

When Winter piles their gorges deep with snow, and makes of every summit's crowning crag a glistening miracle, they are good to look upon: when gentle Spring has touched the warming mould and coaxed each hidden root to flower forth, then spread abroad her emerald mantle over every naked twig and bough, they indeed are more than beautiful: but when Autumn gathers all the mellowness from all the Summer's length of days, and beneath the sunset's sheen of purple splendor, spills in reckless random over peak and ridge and cove, the choicest of her colorings—then, ah, then, even the Artist's brush or Poet's pen are tools too crude for usefulness!



"Where laurel shrubs their waxen cups unfold."

Here's to the Land of the Hemlock and Spruce,
Here's to her hills and her mountains;
Here's to the Land where the rivers unloose,
Here's to her valleys and fountains!

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